

SOME CLAY VESSELS FORMERLY USED BY THE SOUTH SOTHO

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Clay vessels (*lipitsa*) and other clay artefacts were once in general use among the South Sotho. This is indicated by both ethnographic and archaeological records.

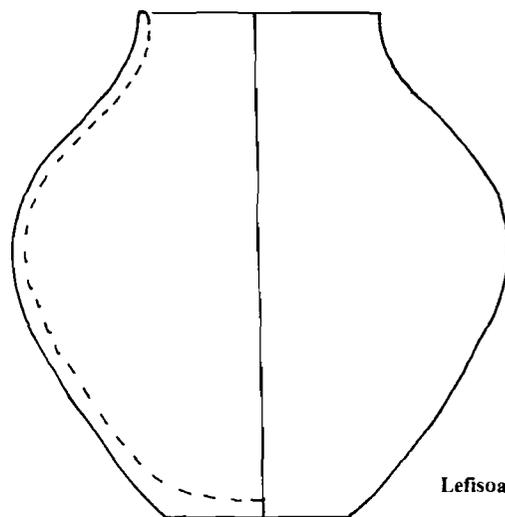
Although some of the sources listed contain related information, none of them specifically refer to Sechefo's paper (n.d.), *The Old Clothing of the Basotho*. Judging from his other publications, this paper may have been written reasonably long ago and deserves some discussion.

Notwithstanding vague and incomplete descriptions and the fact that Sechefo did not specify from which areas in Lesotho he obtained his data, his paper does add to our knowledge of Sotho pottery. It also suggests that a much wider variety of pots were formerly used than is perhaps generally thought. This may both complicate and facilitate the task of archaeologists in reconstructing the material culture of Iron Age Sotho-Tswana peoples.

Sechefo recorded the use of the following clay vessels:

Lefiso: A medium-sized bowl used for storing liquids.

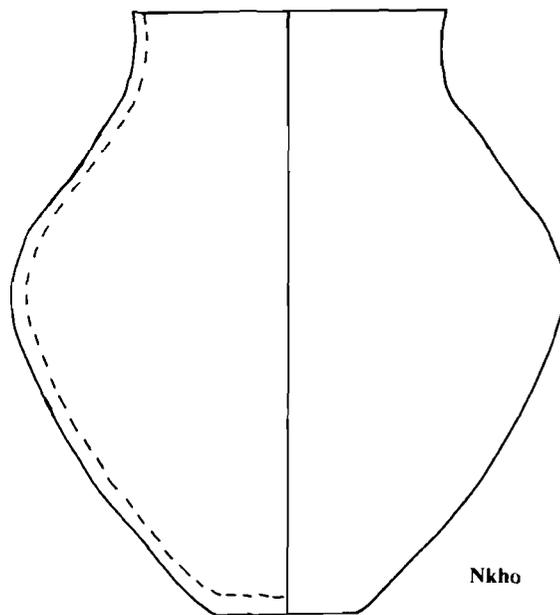
Lefisoana: A smaller bowl of similar shape as the **lefiso**, used for serving food.



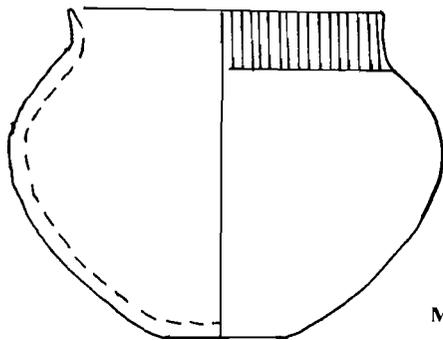
Lefisoana

Nkho: A much larger vessel than the **lefiso** having a narrow neck, used for carrying water and storing liquids.

Mokeke: A small, shallow basin used for dishing up meat or *setoto* (strong beer in the process of preparation).

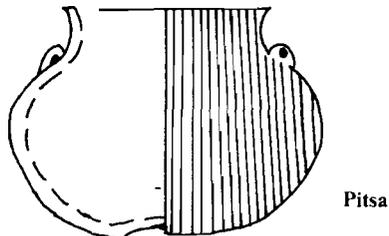


Nkho



Morifi: A vessel in which beer was brewed. Women also used it to take food to male initiates. A smaller variety, the **moritsoana**, was used for serving *bohoko* (a type of porridge) to herdboys.

Mopotjo: A slender beaker, solely used for keeping beer ready for drinking. **Mopotjoana** denoted a smaller beaker of similar shape.



Pitsa: A thick and heavy cooking vessel without a handle or legs. It was supported by three small stones (**matseho**). A flat sherd, obtained from a broken pot, was used as a lid. The edges around the lid were sealed with fresh cow dung to prevent steam from escaping and smoke from entering the vessel. This precaution was taken especially when meat or green mealies were cooked. A smaller cooking vessel of similar shape was denoted **pitsana**.

Setlhotlelo: A large vessel in which *joala* (a type of beer) was brewed.

Khamelo: A clay milking pail with a wide mouth and a flat base. Unlike the **lefiso**, which had a smooth base, the **khamelo** had finger-pinching round the base to prevent it from slipping off the knees of the milker. (Milking was traditionally done by men and boys.) A smaller milking pail of similar shape was denoted **khameloana**.

Sehoro: A medium-sized vessel used for preserving fat.

Selibelo: The smallest of the clay vessels, having a small mouth, was used for storing fat.

Pitsana ea sehlare: A clay vessel with a capacity of approximately half a litre, used exclusively for the cooking of medicines.

Thuana: A chamber-pot. Old women also referred to it as **mauo**.

Other terminology relating to clay vessels recorded by Sechefo are:

moeta: a cracked pot, **mophatha:** an elongated vessel, **mokhako:** a newly fired pot, and **lengeta:** a potsherd.

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